News release

De-icing forecast service success

4 October 2006

Experts from the Met Office have been praised by leading airline operator bmi, for helping it reduce avoidable delays by more than 84%, during one of the coldest winters for many years. The company has also thanked the Met Office for 'exceptional levels of customer service'.

Last winter the Met Office provided a specific forecast service which warned bmi when it would need to de-ice its fleet of aircraft.

The service included forecasts of likely aircraft icing conditions and a tailored guide to holdover times for customer-specified fluid types. Warnings of when to de-ice planes were sent direct to ground staff, or de-icing suppliers and, during critical weather situations, bmi staff had telephone briefings from Met Office forecasters.

Results show that 98% of the forecasts issued to bmi were correct, which in turn helped cut delays to passengers by more than 84%.

Steve Crawley, bmi De-icing and Fuel Co-ordinator, said: "By improving our de-icing operations we have been able to dramatically reduce delays. The de-icing service from the Met Office ensures that planes are ready to depart — on time."

The airline operator now intends to sign a three-year deal for the expansion and continuation of the service.

More about the Met Office's de-icing forecast service

Note to Editors

Airlines use special de-icing equipment and chemicals, which is an expensive business and a very difficult one to manage. If they de-ice too early, they might have to do it again before take off. If they leave it too late, they might not get all their aircraft cleared in time for take-off. To make matters worse, the timings involved vary according to the precise weather conditions. At an estimated cost of £50 per minute, delays can soon become a major burden to an airline's bottom line.

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